
LIFE IN HIS NAME

OVERCOMING BETRAYAL

John 13:18-30

“I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, ‘He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.’ I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.”

After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, “Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus' side, so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, “Lord, who is it?” Jesus answered, “It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.” So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly.” Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, “Buy what we need for the feast,” or that he should give something to the poor. So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

Today's message is about betrayal. When we speak of betrayal we are speaking of someone who has been charged with blessing us, protecting us, providing for us. That someone, instead of being faithful to that charge, actually does the opposite. They hurt us. They abandon us. They work against us. We all know what it is in life to face disappointment, to face difficulty, to face trial, but some hurts hurt worse than other hurts, and betrayal is certainly one of those hurts.

Jesus experienced betrayal. Unless we think that this was really not a difficult thing, not a big deal, the scripture makes it clear in verse 21. “After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit.” He was agitated in his heart. He was stirred up, deeply troubled, “...and testified, “Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.”

It prompts in me a question. Watching Jesus go through this, watching Jesus go through the difficulty of it, I want to ask the question “Why? Why Judas?” Because we are told from God's word that Jesus selected the 12, and that he knew the 12, and very clearly (it's clear in this passage, but in other places as well) Jesus knew that Judas was going to betray him. So, it easily, easily could have been avoided. But it wasn't avoided. In fact, Jesus tells us in this passage that this verse

had to be fulfilled, and this verse is Psalm 41, verse 9, where we read: “Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.”

Now, catch the drama of the moment. In this culture, sharing a meal, sharing bread with someone, spoke of a very close intimacy and commitment in relationship. It was not a casual undertaking. In fact, it was forbidden for the children of Israel to break bread with Gentiles. There were actual rules that codified, if you will, the sacredness of this form of fellowship. That’s in part why Jesus received so much criticism, because he broke bread and fellowshiped with bad people, with bad sinners, communicating a very important message: He came to save sinners. Thank God. Amen?

So, here’s the scene. This verse is quoted. There is this rich cultural understanding and tradition that the sharing of a meal means a commitment to one another. They are reclining at the table. They are not seated as you are now seated and as we typically think when we share a meal at a table. They are reclining on couches with their feet extended away from the table, and their heads toward the table.

Jesus makes this announcement, shares this verse, then when it comes to the moment of revelation, what does Jesus do? In fulfillment of Psalm 41:9, he emphasizes the act of breaking bread. He takes the bread, he takes the morsel, he dips it, he gives it to Judas, and he identifies him as the one who will betray him. It’s a dramatic moment. Jesus is feeling this very deeply. Why? Why is this taking place? Why Psalm 41:9? Why does Jesus have to endure this?

Well, he endures it so that you and I can be healed from betrayal in relationship -- so that you and I can know the wholeness that comes relationally in Jesus Christ when others have failed us, when others have disappointed us, when a parent has betrayed us, when a pastor has betrayed us, when a spouse has betrayed us, when a business partner or a very close friend has betrayed us.

As a pastor, I have sat with numerous individuals who are struggling with events from 20, 30, 40, 50 years ago, where an act of treachery so derailed this individual that it still is the defining moment of their lives. It’s the defining mark of their lives. Jesus experienced it. Please understand the layers that are here.

God raised up King David. King David was someone that the Lord loved and made wonderful promises to about someone sitting on his throne forever. God used this very imperfect man, very much a sinner, committing sins that were what we would say are “large” sins -- adultery, murder, dishonesty – he used this man to provoke in the hearts of the people an expectation for a Messiah, for one who would come and sit on his throne, the throne of David, who would reign forever, who would not disappoint, who would not fail, who would not fall, but who would actually help us in our failings and fallings, in our weaknesses, in our sin, so that we – listen – we might be saved. We need a true King, a true Savior, who without sin can offer himself so that we can be forgiven and set free from sin.

So, if David is going to foreshadow Christ, if he is going to create that expectation in the hearts of the people, and it's going to be his throne that Jesus sits on, then you know what David has to do? David has to go through betrayal. David has to experience betrayal and he will write about it in the psalms, largely thinking of his own experience, his own perspective, but he is really prophesying what Jesus will go through so that we can all be healed of this kind of brokenness in relationship.

Now, it's not just the betrayal we receive that we get healed from. Sadly, we have known what it is to disappoint other people in our lives. If you could think about this for a moment, this is so close and personal to me because when I think about my greatest moments of failure, they are those moments where in my anger, my pride, my sin, my rage, I have hurt the people closest to me -- where I have deeply wounded either my wife or one of my children or fellow elders or staff members. This is what's so evil and hideous about sin. It corrupts the things that are most precious to us. The gospel is such good news.

Parents, I have good news for you. I have bad news and good news. Let me give you the bad news first. You will scar your children. You will fail at moments. I don't mean in a monumental way, but you will disappoint to some degree. I have lived long enough now where my kids help me see how I contributed to their sin. Yeah, it's such a wonderful ministry. "Dad, you did this to me. You made me like this." While they have to learn to take responsibility for themselves, and they are truthfully much more gracious to me than I deserve, there is truth to that charge, isn't there? We see it. We often see our sin in our children. "Wow, they are doing just what I do."

So isn't it wonderfully liberating to say, "Jesus is greater than that! Jesus is greater than my sin. He is greater than my brokenness. My failures will not be the definition of my life, because Jesus brings healing and wholeness and deliverance -- for me and for the people that I love." We experience here that God is being very intentional. He is going to great lengths for Jesus to experience this, that he might redeem us from it.

We are going to quickly move through seven truths that destroy betrayal -- seven betrayal-defeating truths. #1 is this:

1. You can survive betrayal.

You can survive. You can actually thrive. I think that's one of the main ideas here. Jesus is predicting what will take place, and he is doing it so that they will understand after it takes place and not be undone by it. God does not want you to be undone by the relational disappointments in your life. He doesn't want that to define your life. He wants you to have faith to believe that no matter how devastating, no matter how wrong it is, he is greater. His mercy is greater. Where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more. God will not only heal you, God will not only bring a cleansing of the bitterness of

that experience, but he will use it redemptively. He will use it constructively in your life and in the lives of others as his grace and healing flow through you. God's plan is big enough to work even in spite of betrayal.

2. Loyalty is beautiful.

We celebrate Adam's years of service here today. Let's just face it. It's very unusual to have this kind of longevity in even church life, where individuals are able to commit themselves to one another. It tells a story of even greater loyalty, greater faithfulness, greater commitment. Mike and Rebecca came to this church many years ago. Mike serves on our staff – just a loyal, faithful brother. This church exists because of many individuals who just pour out their lives in serving others faithfully day after day without fanfare, without recognition. Loyalty is beautiful.

I'm not speaking here about the kind of loyalty that never disagrees, that never calls into question, that says, "You are always right -- it would be disloyal for me not to support you on this particular item." I've joked about this before, but occasionally I'll hear about some church where individuals will observe that the pastor surrounds himself with yes men. All the elders are yes men and no one really stands up to him. No one really disagrees. I laugh at that, because if you come to our elders meetings, sometimes they are really heated. I have been praying for one yes man, just one. Of course I'm kidding, because in reality you want the kind of substance in relationship where you are not afraid that you are going to be cast out when you disagree. It's just not right. It's not biblical.

If it sounds like I'm boasting, we are doing it very imperfectly. But it is a value. We believe that there is not one elder in this church with all the power, but that there is a group of elders and that they rule. They are actually in many ways subject to you, the congregation, because God has called them to serve you. They are disqualified when they lord authority over other people. I say that with fear and trembling because not a single one of those men is claiming to be perfect by any stretch. We are sinners in need of God's grace. I am making the point here that loyalty is beautiful, but I don't want you to misunderstand what I mean by it. Give yourself to perseverance and longevity in relationship. It's pleasing to the Lord.

3. Love offers an escape.

Love offers an escape before betrayal happens. Jesus is here, and he knows this is going to happen, and he lets Judas know that he knows. He is prompting Judas to repent, to turn, giving him every opportunity to confront what's in his heart. It reminds me of Genesis Chapter 4, the sin of Cain against Abel, where Cain murders his brother. In Genesis 4:6-7 the Lord comes to Cain before that happens and he says, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well..." (This is such a vivid picture -- look at this.) "...Sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it."

“Cain! Cain, listen. You are about to do something, and this will be the defining moment of your life. Sin is coming to destroy, to bring destruction. It is crouching at the door. You can master this.” That is a picture of what love does. It provides an opportunity for the people in our lives to escape that tragic moment.

Let me give you the next point, and then I think together they will make more sense.

4. Renounce once and for all the practice of entrapment.

You know what entrapment is? It's where you trap the people closest to you in failure. You know, this is a big part of marriage and it's a big part of close relationships. As you get to know people, you know their weaknesses. You know the patterns of their life, right? You know if they're going to fall, where they are likely to fall. If you really get ticked off, you can just set them up for failure. “You know, he never remembers our anniversary. I'm not going to say anything. I'm not going to mention it. I'm going to tell the kids: ‘Don't say a word.’ I'm going to act like it's just another day and I'm going to see if...”

Please don't misunderstand me. This is not a justification for men to forget their anniversaries -- men or women. But there is a place in relationship where when the people we love are weak, we don't want to expose that. We don't want to test them. We don't want to set them up for failure. We want to do the very opposite, right? We want to offer a way of escape. We want to prompt them. We want to help them. We want to serve them. That's really what love is, right? Making us stronger, helping us in our weakness.

That happens, friends, when we have unforgiveness, when we take in an offense, we get wounded, and bitterness starts to sour in our hearts. We like that feeling a little bit. We like that identity as a victim and we start to cultivate it, then we start to own it and make it our own and it begins to defile the relationship.

Again, I'm not offering this as a justification for failure or abuse or rejection. I just see this in the love of Jesus. Renounce the practice of entrapment.

5. Jesus offers to us security.

Relationship-altering security. Verse 20: “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.” Jesus says, “Listen, I'm inviting you into the love that I share with the Father. I'm not here on my own accord. The Father has sent me. I'm in his authority, and I'm sending you. And if I send you, you are going with my authority and the authority of God the Father.”

In fact, earlier in the chapter we saw it in verse 3, when Jesus got ready to wash the disciples' feet. We called attention to this last week. “Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God

and was going back to God, rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist." And he served.

Here is the picture. Jesus knows where he has come from. He knows where he is going. He knows that God has put all authority upon him and given everything into his hands. He is completely secure in the love and the purpose of the Father for his life. See that! When you come to Jesus, he is inviting you into that circle, so that you walk in God's power, God's authority. I don't mean that you are God, but I mean that you and I live in the security of who God is, and his love, and his plan, and his purpose for our lives. It transforms the way we treat others. It frees us to serve. It frees us to find our identity outside of how others treat us, or how others view us, and it allows us to live in this dynamic.

Let me just give you two other references to reinforce this. Later in the book of John when Jesus is commissioning his disciples and he is getting ready to leave, he says in verse 21 of Chapter 20: "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." Matthew has something similar as Jesus commissions his apostles. Matthew 28:18: "And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.'"

We are invited to come into the security of the relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – to live in that safe place, to live in that security. In the passage we will look at next week Jesus moves out of this, in contrast to the disloyalty of Judas. Jesus tells his disciples this in John 13:34: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another." Listen to verse 35: "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Riverside Church: I call you to this verse. May we be known as a people who humbly walk with God. We may not be prominent. We may not be well known. We may not get the attention of the world. But when people see us, may they see devotion to Christ and love for one another. In order for that to happen (we are frail, fragile people) we have to walk in the forgiveness that is ours in Jesus Christ. We need a wide berth of grace, which again is not an excuse to be careless.

6. Security removes paranoia.

Do you know what I mean here? I mean that fear -- that thought that they are thinking bad things about me, that they are planning bad things for me. The scene is really a little comical, if it weren't so tragic. There at the Last Supper they are reclining when Jesus makes this announcement: "Truly, truly I say to you, someone is going to betray me." They are like, "Who is it? Is it me? Is it you? Who is it?" There is an atmosphere of paranoia. So as only Peter can do, he looks at John.

John identifies himself in this passage as the one whom Jesus loved. Evidently, he was on the right side of Jesus, reclining. Peter is like, “John, ask him.” They are reclining, so John does one of these things where he leans back on Jesus and says, “Who is it?” which leads to that dipping of the bread and the revelation.

This is not just some lofty principle. When we find our identity and true security in Jesus Christ, we begin to experience a transforming freedom to not be in fear all the time about what others are doing and thinking. We learn to be more charitable in our judgments of others. Do you know what I mean by charitable? We give them the benefit of the doubt. We don’t presume to know the motivations of their hearts.

We had our bilingual service last night, so this is our second service of the weekend. I told them this story. Years ago my daughter was playing soccer. She is a competitive athlete – an amazing athlete. I think it’s genetic. I had a high view of her skills. They were in a big playoff game and out of nowhere the coach takes her out and puts her on the sideline. I’m starting to get agitated. “Why is she not playing? She should be playing. She’s clearly better than these other kids. What is going on?” I’m exaggerating, but I am starting to get stirred up a little bit. I’m not exaggerating by much. And she sits out the rest of the game.

At the end of the game, I’m looking for the coach. Where is this coach? I find her, and she sees me coming, but before I can say a word she says, “Your daughter is not feeling well. She’s sick. She asked to be taken out of the game.” Yeah. Good. Yeah. Never doubted it.

You see, I constructed an entire narrative based on falsehood. It was completely uncharitable, as if to say it’s unthinkable that my child was going to come out of the game. That’s faulty in and of itself, right? We do this in relationship. We carry judgment of other people, often based on what we think they are feeling and thinking and the motivations of their hearts. In reality, we have no idea. Newsflash: They are probably not even thinking about you. I don’t mean that in a cruel way. God wants to bring healing to us in this fashion, so much so that he endured deep betrayal by someone who lived with him day in and day out for three years.

You know what happens in betrayal? You get close enough to someone, they let you in, and you see things you are not supposed to see. You see things. You see weaknesses that if you flip can bring dramatic destruction in their lives. That’s just part of why it hurts so deeply.

Early in the ministry I was given great counsel by my Father and horrible counsel by someone else. That other counsel was: “Listen, Brian, as a pastor, do not have close friendships in the church. Don’t let people into your life.” Thank God for my Dad who said, “You know, Son, you lay down your life in the church and you serve people. You will not effectively pastor them if you don’t let them in. And there will be times when your weakness,” which is not hard to see (that’s me

speaking, not my Dad) “will be exploited. You can survive it.” That’s the point of this message. You can trust again. You can have meaningful relationship. You can transcend the hurt of your past. You can even transcend the hurt of the future because Jesus brings healing to disloyalty and betrayal.

I’m going to say this as a word of encouragement. I do not want to paint a dim picture, because what you saw here was not just some pretend display of loving on Adam, and Tim coming up and saying, “Let’s bless our pastors.” The reality is – I say this unapologetically – this church treats me so much better than I deserve. You are good to your pastors. You say kind things. You say good things. You treat us well. Thank you. Thank you. This is a great place to be a pastor. This is a great church to be a part of. If you don’t have a church home, you should join this church. Do it now. Do not delay. I would join it if I weren’t the pastor.

Last point:

7. Be prepared to fight.

This is not a marital principle. Notice verse 27: “After he had taken the morsel,” (that is Judas) “Satan entered into him.” We saw the same thought back in verse 2 of this chapter, that Satan, the devil, had already put it into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus. Here’s what I want you to see in this last point. There is an element of spiritual warfare involved in relationship, in any relationship that really matters.

The enemy is the accuser of the brethren. He seeks to divide. He seeks to destroy. The Holy Spirit brings unity. Ephesians 4:3 says we are to be “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” That which is natural and intrinsic to the Spirit of God is to unite our hearts in Jesus Christ, but there are supernatural forces that oppose us. God works strongly to build unity in your marriage. Satan opposes that unity and works against it in all family relationships, in all deep friendships and in all relationships that matter. We shouldn’t live in fear, but we should be mindful that we have to fight for this. We have to work at it. We have to purpose to deal with offense, to keep a short list, and to resolve offense, and pray for the enemy to be kept out.

Of course, as we close we should note that the ultimate betrayal is our betrayal of God. It’s just the reality. Romans 1 tells us God made us, we are his, and that loyalty to God very simply looks like thanksgiving and worship. We honor God as the creator. We are the created. But Romans 1 tells us we haven’t done that. We have all rebelled against God. We have all sinned against God. In reality, we have loved things that God made, gifts that God has given us, more than we have loved God. And his amazing love is such that he sent his Son to pay the penalty of that betrayal, that disloyalty.

Friends, God desires to have a relationship with you. He desires for you to know what it is to walk with him, to have the gift of eternal life. He invites you to come to Jesus, to trust in him and to receive a gift – the gift of salvation, the gift of

eternal life. That transformation in your own heart and in your relationship with him will then begin to transform your relationships. That is the promise that Jesus gives in calling us to a place of healing and overcoming betrayal.

I want to ask you to respond in two ways.

- 1) Come to Christ. Trust in him. Ask him to forgive you of your sin. Tell him that you believe that Jesus died for you, and receive the gift of salvation. That's first and foremost.
- 2) But then there's an application for all of us here to receive the healing that comes relationally, to trust God to bring that healing where we have offended and where we have been offended.

Amen?